

William Adams House  
(known as the Adams-Kilty House)  
131 Charles Street  
Annapolis  
Anne Arundel County  
Maryland

HABS No. MD-264

HABS  
MD,  
2-ANNA,  
47-

PHOTOGRAPHS  
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE INFORMATION

Historic American Buildings Survey  
National Park Service  
Department of the Interior  
Washington, D.C. 20240

WILLIAM ADAMS HOUSE  
(known as the Adams-Kilty House)

Location: 131 Charles Street, Annapolis, Anne Arundel County, Maryland

Present Owner: Rear Admiral William W. Warlick, USN (ret.)

Present Occupant: Same.

Present Use: Private residence.

Brief Statement of Significance: Brick Georgian home of small and very livable scale, and with interesting detail.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

## A. Physical History

1. Original and subsequent owners: Cited in the list of deeds below:

1718 - Anne Arundel County Deeds, Liber TH2, Hall of Records, Annapolis, "Certificates of Surveys of lots in Annapolis", 1718-1725: Lots #52, 53 and 55 owned by William Gresham of Kent County according to Stoddert's Survey of 1718.

Apparently the property passed to another member of the Gresham family. No official record found.

1770 - Kent County Wills, Liber 38, folio 703, Hall of Records, Annapolis: Lots #52, 53, 55 willed by John Gresham to Thomas Gresham "my three lotts in the city of Annapolis lying and being between the lot of Daniel Dulany, Esquire, and the printing office."

1772 - Chancery Court Records, Vol. 18, folio 72, Land Office, Annapolis: from Thomas Gresham to William Adams of William Adams of Somerset County. Adams agreed to pay £186 by December 5, 1772 and £120 by May 14, 1773. Recorded in Chancery because Gresham died before bond fully complied with. Deed to lots was not actually decreed until November 28, 1789.

1786 - Provincial Court Deeds, Liber TBH 1, folio 517, (Feb. 28), Land Office, Annapolis: Adams leased

the property to Thomas Brooke Hodgkins of Annapolis for a term of twelve years beginning April 20, 1786, for the annual sum of £40. Terms of lease included agreement that Hodgkins put interior and exterior of house in good repair, erect a fence around the property, put in a water pump, build a meat house, carriage house, and stable, and enclose sufficient portion for a garden.

- 1796 - (July 30) Chancery Court Records, Vol. 47, folio 324, Land Office, Annapolis: Adams died in 1795, survived by his widow. In 1796, his brothers and their children filed a petition for settlement of Adams' estate naming themselves heirs. The Court decided the estate should be evaluated and sold.
- 1796 - The Court had the property appraised at £1125 on August 1, 1797. In 1798, the estate was still unsettled and the property was reevaluated at £900. On June 4, 1799, Chancery Court with the trustees, Robert Denny and Gen. John Davidson, decided to sell the property by public auction.
- 1798 - During this period the house was occupied by Gen. John Davidson. (Tax List 1798, Middle Neck Hundred, Anne Arundel County and Maryland Gazette, October 10, 1799.)
- 1799 - (November 14) "The property was purchased for £775 by William Kilty, later Chancellor of Maryland." (Elder, p. 6).
- 1802 - Provincial Court Deeds, Liber JC6, folio 286, Land Office, Annapolis: Robert Denny, Trustee for estate of William Adams, dec., to William Kilty. Deed consale of house and lots 52, 53, 55.
- 1818 - (October 2) Anne Arundel County Deeds, Liber WSG6, folio 111, Hall of Records, Annapolis: William Kilty to Francis Hollingsworth, Lots 52, 53, and 55 for \$3150.00 current money.
- 1819 - Anne Arundel County Deeds WSG10, folio 395, Hall of Records, Annapolis: Mentioned in this deed that Francis Hollingsworth sold Lots 52 and 53 to Thomas H. Bowie, who died before paying for the property. Chancery Court therefore appointed Hollingsworth trustee to sell the estate.
- 1824 - Anne Arundel County Deeds, Liber WSG10, folio 395, Hall of Records, Annapolis: Francis Hollingsworth,

trustee, to Dr. George Wells, Lots 52 and 53 with dwelling and improvements for \$3025.00.

- 1877 - Anne Arundel County Deeds, Liber SH10, folio 488,  
County Court House, Annapolis: Mortgage to the  
Farmers National Bank by George Wells, Sr.
- 1878 - Anne Arundel County Deeds, Liber SH13, folio 188,  
County Court House, Annapolis: Transfer of mortgage  
(SH10 F.488) from Alexander Randall, Bank President,  
to the Bank. " . . . lately resided in by George  
Wells, Sr."
- 1879 - Anne Arundel County Deeds, Liber SH14, folio 205,  
County Court House, Annapolis: Farmer's National  
Bank to Miss Annie Wells.
- 1908 - (February 18) Anne Arundel County Deeds, Liber GW58,  
folio 53, County Court House, Annapolis: Miss Annie  
Wells to Mr. George Wells.

It has not yet been ascertained what the relationship between the various "George Wells" mentioned is, and whether there are two or three persons concerned.

- 1918 - (June 1) Anne Arundel County Wills, Liber OBD2, folio 113,  
County Court House, Annapolis: George Wells to  
his three nieces, the Misses Beatrice, Frances, and  
Louise Wells.
- 1920 - Anne Arundel County Deeds, Liber WNW33, folio 67,  
County Court House, Annapolis: Beatrice Wells, et  
al to Walter H. Hart.
- 1944 - (December 18) Anne Arundel County Deeds, Liber JHH32  
folio 89, County Court House, Annapolis: Mercantile  
Trust Company, executors of the will of Walter H.  
Hart to Stanley J. Reynolds.
- 1958 - (June 18) Anne Arundel County Deeds, Liber GTC1200,  
folio 25, County Court House, Annapolis: John H.  
Hopkins, et al, trustees for the estate of Stanley  
J. Reynolds to William and Mary B. Warlick. (Sale  
by decree of Circuit Court, Equity #10,614.)

- 2. Date of erection: Begun 1773 (Elder, p. 1.)
- 3. Architect: Attributed to William Buckland because of the  
similarity of floor plan with the Hammond-Harwood House,

19 Maryland Avenue, Annapolis (HABS No. MD-251).

4. Builder, suppliers, etc.: William Adams.
  5. Original plans, construction, etc.: The original plans do not exist, however, records indicate the interior floor plan is basically unchanged. The plan is similar to the Hammond-Harwood House, reversed, and the brick work is also similar. (Elder, p. 9)
  6. Alterations and additions: A Victorian porch added to the front in the late nineteenth century, caused removal of the door and window woodwork nearly identical to that of the Chase-Lloyd House. The house was made into a duplex in the nineteenth century. Although the house is once again a single dwelling, the dining room still contains a large nineteenth century staircase. There is a two story addition on the rear of the house using two of the original windows as doorway and cupboards.
- B. Historical Events Connected with the Structure: The house was occupied in 1798 by General John Davidson. In 1779, William W. Kilty, Chancellor of Maryland, purchased the building to use as his home.

The home of Dr. George Wells, prominent Annapolis newspaper publisher and political leader, from 1842 to the late nineteenth century.

C. Sources of Information:

1. Old views: Front view with original doorway, Magruder Collection. Three-quarter view, back porches visible, Elder manuscript. F. B. Mayer sketchbook, Baltimore Museum, circa 1886: Shows front doorway treatment similar to Chase House.

2. Bibliography:

Chancery Court Records, Land Office, Annapolis.

Elder, William. Adams-Kilty House, unpublished manuscript, Maryland Historical Trust, Annapolis.

Index Files of Historic Annapolis, Inc., Hall of Records, Annapolis

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: An eighteenth century house, altered and largely restored, with refined interior finish and interesting roof framing.
2. Condition of fabric: Mostly very good.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Overall dimensions: Two stories, over high basement; five-bay front. The main block is about 35 feet square, plus a rear addition; it faces southeast.
2. Foundations: Four feet high, of brick laid in English bond, with a stepped water table two courses high.
3. Wall construction: Brick laid in Flemish bond, a rather uniform red in color. There are flat arches of rubbed brick over front window openings, segmental arches over window openings on the side walls, with brick infilling above the trim. There is a belt course of brick at the second floor level, four courses high. The addition is of wood frame, covered with wood shingles.
4. Framing: Exterior walls and major bearing partitions are of brick. Floors and roof are framed in timber. Basement partitions are brick, with wood lintels over openings. Floor framing is mostly concealed; that of the stair hall has 3" x 7" joists, 18" on centers, with 1-1/2" x 3" tenons on the ends which frame into the stair trimmer. The space between the joists of the first floor is said to be filled with sand to deaden sound. Attic joists are 3" x 6", 20" on centers.

The roof framing is remarkable as well as unusual; it centers on a large post resting on major girders. The post is 11" x 10-1/2", widening to 16" x 17-1/2" at the base; is turned diagonally, so that a 2-3/4" x 5" strut springs from each face to support a 5" x 5" hip rafter near its center. Rafters are 3-1/4" x 3-3/4", two feet on centers, supported on purlins a little below mid-span. Each purlin on the front and rear sides rests on a post at the center. Timbers appear to be hewn.

5. Porches, stoops, bulkheads, etc.: The front stoop is a modern replacement; it has an ornamental iron railing.

6. Chimneys: One wide brick chimney on each side is located internally; their width is parallel to the facade, which is unusual in Annapolis. They have corbelled caps.

7. Openings:

- a. Doorways and doors: The main entrance is centered on the street, southeast, facade; it is rectangular with a glazed transom, the opening being framed by a wood architrave. The door has six moulded panels with raised fields; it and the moulded transom bar are set deeply into the brick opening. The wooden sill has a nosing moulding.

Somewhat off-center of the southwest wall is an original opening, now closed by a window and paneling.

- b. Windows and shutters: Openings are rectangular, trimmed with wood--wide pieces moulded and set in the brick openings near the wall plane. Sills are moulded wood. Sash are double hung, mostly six lights over six lights (four-over-four in small windows of the street facade, flanking the door and the window above it). Basement window openings are segmental arched.

8. Roof:

- a. Shape, covering: There is a hip roof, now covered with sheet metal, under which are older riven wood shingles.
- b. Cornice, eaves: There is wooden cornice consisting of ovolo, dentil course, ovolo, plain modillion course, corona and cymatium (the last hidden by sheet metal gutters of recent date).

- C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plans:

- a. First floor: This house has suffered alterations, some of which have not been rectified, but the original plan is reasonably clear. In the front half is a central entrance hall and a room at each side of it. Behind this is a larger room on the right (northeast), thought to have been the living room, and on the left a lateral stair hall (whose side entrance to the garden is now closed up), and a smaller room, thought to have been a dining room.

In its present state, the first floor differs from its original plan in the following respects: 1) A modern straight-flight stair ascends along the southwest wall of the living room. 2) A door, once leading to the garden, at the outer end of the stair hall, has been closed, as has another from that entrance to the dining room. This latter doorway would have afforded service entrance from the basement kitchen under the dining room. 3) The present opening from the stair hall to the dining room is a later addition, now providing kitchen services, which necessitated transforming two windows on that wall into cabinets, and a third into a doorway. It is thought that this addition replaced a porch.

b. Second floor: The layout is similar to that of the first floor. In its present state the second floor includes several partitions which are not original.

2. Stairways: A stair occupies the lateral hall; it appears to be original except for the railing, which appears to date from about 1870. It is of the dog-leg type, with sixteen risers, open string, moulded walnut handrail, turned newel, moulded turned balusters (two per tread), and yellow pine treads, whose nosings have been repaired in several places. One turned post at the upper end of the rail appears original.

Below the main flight is a basement stair of twelve risers, with a closed string, simple square post and handrail; it appears original.

A modern stair is located in the present living room.

3. Flooring: The original floors are of yellow pine boards, varying from 5" to 7-1/2" in width, where visible. Most areas are now covered with narrow oak flooring. Hearths are of brick and of stone.
4. Wall and ceiling finish: Walls and ceilings are typically plastered, with plaster cornices. First-story rooms generally are wainscoted in wood, and window opening recesses extend to the floor. Doors have six moulded panels with raised fields, the top pair of panels being squarish and others vertical. Openings are trimmed with wood architrave mouldings. The jambs and soffits of door openings are paneled.
  - a. Entrance hall, first story: The plaster cornice consists of fillet, astragal, cove with penetrations (38 across the end, 52 along the side), no soffit,



corona, cyma reversa and cyma recta. Much of the original cornice remains but substantial parts have been restored.

The wainscot consists of a high base with a small moulding, a plain space above made of two wide boards, and dado rail consisting of astragal, neck, cyma reversa and torus.

- b. Southwest front room, first story: The plaster cornice consists of cavetto, astragal, fascia, fillet and cyma recta. There is a fireplace on a projecting chimney breast, with a segmental-arched opening. It has a narrow wood architrave and, at each side, a paneled pilaster strip capped by a plain console with pendant guttae; between the consoles is a plain frieze. Bed mouldings consist of cavetto, dentil course and ovolo. The corona has a projecting bead at the lower edge, and perforations which give the effect of fret band. The cornice is completed by a cavetto. The cornice breaks out over the consoles. The hearth is brick.

The wainscot generally follows the scheme of a Roman Doric pedestal.

- c. Northeast front room, first story: The plaster cornice consists of a fillet, astragal, cove, coronal and cymatium. There is a fireplace on a projecting chimney breast; it has plain pilasters with moulded capitals and bases, carrying a plain frieze and mantel shelf. The lower edge of the frieze is shaped like a low Tudor arch. This is apparently a mid-nineteenth century mantel piece. The fireplace opening is segmental arched. The hearth is stone. The room has no wainscot--only a plain wood base.
- d. Southwest rear room, first story: This is thought to be the original dining room. There is a fireplace but its mantel piece has been lost. The wainscot generally resembles a Roman Doric pedestal. A cabinet has been built into a former opening of the rear wall.
- e. Northeast rear room, first story: This is thought to be the original living room. There is a rich plaster cornice and ornamental plaster on the ceiling which may be original. The cornice consists of cyma reversa, dentil course, ovolo enriched with egg and leaf, a course of enriched modillions with

rosettes in the soffit spaces, corona, enriched cyma reversa, and cyma recta.

On the ceiling is a large rectangular panel formed by a foliated band about three inches wide in which acanthus leaves are twined about a thick stem. This band is about two-thirds complete now; at the corners and center of each side are larger leaf motifs. There is a circular centerpiece, its pendant circled with oak leaves and acorns, from which radiate eight large leaf-like panels. Near the periphery are pairs of C-scrolls alternating with circles, outside of which is a frame made by an enriched bead moulding. From this radiate eight larger and eight smaller motifs; the larger ones are sprays, each of two compound leaves and a central flower. The smaller motifs consist of an egg with foliage arranged symmetrically at the sides.

The above ornamental plaster work is in fairly good condition; painting and wear have partially obscured the smaller details.

The mantelpiece has paneled pilaster strips capped by moulded consoles, a paneled tablet in the frieze, small ovolo bed moulding, corona and cymatium. A small moulded shelf atop this appears to be an addition. A cabinet has been built into a former opening of the rear wall.

The wainscoting generally resembles the pedestal of a Roman Doric Order.

- f. Stair hall, second story: A coved plaster ceiling in the form of a barrel vault covers this compartment; it is constructed on wood lath nailed to semicircular-shaped boards (which can be seen in the attic, rising higher than other ceilings). A wooden wainscot has a dado rail corresponding to the form of the handrail.
- g. Finish in second-story rooms: Door and window openings have architrave trim. Doors are six-panel. There is a simple base.

Three rooms have fireplaces, on projecting chimney breasts:

Southwest front room. This has an architrave, plain frieze, and cornice with bed moulding.

Northeast front room. A plain fireplace (having lost its mantel).

Northeast rear room. The opening is rectangular, with architrave moulding, plain pilaster strips, plain frieze, and cornice with bed mouldings.

- h. Interior shutters: Paneled shutters of the first story are original; those of the second story were lost and have been replaced during restoration.
  - i. Basement finish: The area is divided by partitions and is mostly ceiled, either with plaster on split lath or wide boards. The floor is paved with brick. In the southwest rear compartment (originally a kitchen) is a simple fireplace. The other chimney structures have arched void spaces in the center.
- 5. Doorways and doors: Few of the first-story openings retain their doors.
  - 6. Notable hardware: Some second-story doors are fitted with cast-iron box locks. One door is hung on wrought-iron HL hinges.

D. Site:

- 1. General setting and orientation: The house fronts southeast on Charles Street in a closely built residential neighborhood; prints of the 1860's however, show considerable open space around this house. At the southwest is now a private access way. There is a small yard at the rear and the northeast side.
- 2. Enclosures: An iron picket fence with finials on the posts and two ornamental gates, on the front, is harmonious with the house, but not original.

Edited by Eleni Silverman, HABS Historian  
March 15, 1984

from reports by Florence Dunbar,  
Historic Annapolis  
November 1964

and

Harley J. McKee  
Architect, N.P.S.  
August 14, 1964